



GIVING IT ALL

Hard work has the Hool brothers enjoying a solid season

We (my brother, Kris, and I) just spent a relaxing weekend at the dragstrip. No, we weren't racing our Top Alcohol Funny Car; instead, we were helping friends race their Super Comp dragster at the Douglas Motorsports Park National Open. Brock Green (driver) and his lovely wife, Frances, of Penrose, Colo., made it to the semifinals carrying the Grippler Hand Cleaner logo on the side of their Super Comp dragster. For being new to Super Comp racing, Brock did very well and has many more round-wins and race wins in his future.

It was a completely relaxing race weekend. We did not worry about fuel systems, clutch settings, gearing, 90-minute turnarounds, or anything associated with Top Alcohol racing. We went to the races to watch, enjoy, lend a hand when needed, and say hello to many old friends from our bracket racing days of the 1980s. It was a much-needed weekend to remember why we started drag racing many years ago.

Our lives really seem to have been on the run since we left in February to race in Bradenton, Fla., with the Grippler Hand Cleaner/Koolraceshops.com Top Alcohol Funny Car. Our season so far has been the perfect storm of highs and lows. We won the first race of the year — our first win — and we have run in the 5.50s at almost 263 mph. The best part is that we haven't hurt any parts doing it.

We've had some goofy little things go wrong but nothing major related to the tune-up on the car.

We have good parts from BAE, B&J Transmissions, GRP Rods, Mark Williams, LAT Synthetic Racing Oils, and Taylor Wires, to name a few. We also have a great car built by Mike Robeck at Robeck Custom Fabrication. This was our first new car, and it's everything we could have asked for. Kris loves to drive this car. He says it drives like a Cadillac. That isn't always the case with TAFCS. I've seen some evil cars out there over the years, cars that you could tell the driver wasn't all that thrilled to get into. We are very blessed to have the car and driver combination that we do. It's just fun, or, as Bob Frey says, "It's, well, cool!"

While on the road this year, we have noticed one big thing: There are more "fast" Top Alcohol Funny Cars than at any other time that I can remember since starting in this class back in the early 1990s. Notice I didn't say "more cars," I said more "fast" cars. To put it simply, there are a lot of 5.50- and 5.60-second TAFCS out there right now. I don't think there has ever been a time where so many cars have had a legitimate shot at winning races. At any race we have competed this year, there has been a real possibility that more than 50 to 60 percent of the cars in attendance had a reasonable shot to win the race. These guys have "bad fast" race cars and, as Alan Reinhart likes to say, "Come and get ya some!"

This season, we will most likely attend a race in each of NHRA's seven geographic divisions. So far this year, we have raced at tracks in Division 2, 3, 4, and 5. In a few weeks, we will hit the road headed for Seattle (Division 6). Later in the year, we will race in Reading (Division 1) and end the year in Las Vegas

(Division 7) and Pomona. That means we will have raced in every division. We will have seen and raced against every division's best cars. It's fun racing the best. It makes you sharp and more focused in everything you do. You push yourself to be a better, more prepared, and more relaxed team racing against the best on a weekly basis. After a while, that focus becomes a way of life, and you get better, faster!

T AFC is still referred to as a Sportsman class, but there is nothing Sportsman about what we do anymore. The top-shelf teams in alcohol racing are straight-up professionals. These teams are well-funded and have the best equipment and technology that money can buy. The crews for these teams have five to six crewmembers with some of them being full-time team members. Some even have full-time paid crew chiefs. Now and then you even see collaboration between alcohol and nitro crew chiefs on the tune-up. There are quite a few retired racers now in the tuning business. That makes this high-horsepower environment more available and affordable to more racers. Good parts, good crew, and good information make for fast Top Alcohol Funny Cars. The bottom line is that if you look past any of these teams, you're going to be headed home early.

Our crew most of the time at the track is Kris and me. At the shop, it's Kris and me. We have great friends who go to the track to help, and we greatly appreciate it when they take time to travel to a race to help us. We just can't thank them enough. We have also made new friends who we have drafted into service at the track. If you are hanging around our pit area when it's time to go to the line, you may be called on to help — that is no joke. We have taken people right from the crowd to help us at the starting line. But the wrenches that turn on the car are turned by Kris and me. It makes our program very different from many of the other teams.

A couple of times this year, we have actually had a few weeks off. "Weeks off" only means we aren't working on the road. The work never stops in this business. There are no vacations or leisure time during the season if you want to be successful in NHRA Top Alcohol racing. During the "time off," we search for anything we can do different to shave a few hundredths off our times. The engine is making great power and not hurting parts. That means we have to look in the can (clutch can) or transmission. After looking in depth at the computer data, there were real problems in how the car reacted in the first 300 feet. (We have never had a computer before this year — it is cool to know what's going on!) We are able to run the back half of the track with anyone, but we are struggling to be consistently quick in the 60- to 330-foot part of the track. With the way our car is running the back half, if we can get the 330-foot time down, we can go rounds at any race.

For a while this year, we occupied the No. 1 spot in the national standings. I know it was early, but it was an amazing feeling. That was then, and this is now. We have been bumped down to the No. 8 spot as I write this. I don't know where we will end up, but I can promise one thing: We will have raced hard and will have given our best against the best Top Alcohol Funny Cars in the world. **ND**